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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Religion of a Child under Four

In the *Graded Sunday School Magazine*, April, G. Walter Fiske discusses the subject indicated above. He recognizes that many insist that a child under four cannot be religious and that we should not try to make him so. Certainly he cannot be religious as an adult is religious, and to attempt to force upon him the religion of his father is to sin against the child. For this very reason wise Christian parents hesitate to place their little children in Sunday school until they make certain that the teacher knows the difference between the religion of the child and the religion of mature people. It is not at all necessary to regard the child as a pagan in his early years. During this period, even if he is not actually religious, he is getting his religious foundations. Therefore there should be great caution to avoid giving the child false ideas of God and of life. Things that are artificial, insincere, or unnatural to the child's consciousness should be shunned, while we gently but intelligently guide the ripening of instincts and the unfolding of the heart toward God and duty. But the child's early religious education includes vastly more than the definite teaching or imparting of religion. "It may well include all the significant beginnings of social life and of personal efficiency." Many simple human things are fundamental to the natural religious experience of the child.

The study of heredity makes it clear that moral character and a Christian conscience do not come to a child by organic inheritance any more than language does. They are all a part of his social inheritance. That is, he must be taught them. He must learn them by precept and example and develop them through practice; and a vast amount of these early beginnings occur within the first three years of life. . . . In those three miraculous years of babyhood the child grows more rapidly and more wonderfully, in every phase of his being, than at any other period of his life.

Many things go into the great life-foundation of these very early years, such as the training of hand and eye and ear to act co-operatively, the beginning of deftness and skill through general muscular co-ordination, the discriminating use of the uprushing instincts which so easily die by neglect or become habits, the right direction of play hunger so that through self-expression it becomes the great revealer and discoverer of life's joys and powers. "To have a hand in the guidance of the miracle of early life is the royal privilege of parents and teachers of the little child. The future of the church, the state, the race, depends on their devoted faithfulness to the interests of childhood."

Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the Religious Education Association

A small group conference converted to a successful, impressive convention; that was the effect of the theme "Organizing the Community" at the Fifteenth Annual Meeting of the Religious Education Association. Under war conditions it was deemed best to call this meeting at Hotel McAlpine, New York, on March 5 and 6, and to plan for a specialized conference; but the reputation of the participants and the vital importance of the theme attracted large numbers to this meeting. The papers discussed "The Basis of World Brotherhood," "The Methods of Training in Brotherhood," "The Forms of Community Organization," "The Functions of Community Factors," "Types of Community Leadership," "Educational Work in Special Communities." "The Declaration of Principles" made a strong statement as to the relations of the community to education in democracy. It affirmed:

Democracy and religion can be and ought to be two aspects of one and the same life. . . . To reveal God aright and to fulfil its function

in human life religion must become more moral and more democratic. The world-community can believe in no merely tribal or national God, with favorite children whose battles he fights, whose ambition he coddles, and to whom alone he grants glimpses of his will, not in a merely sovereign, autocratic God, who exploits men without feeling for their misery or regard for their desires. . . . The supreme bond of the world will be a God of right and justice, who owns all men as his children and who steadfastly seeks with them and through them the common good.

Dr. S. A. Eliot, president of the American Unitarian Association, was elected president for the current year. The general secretary reported an increase in membership during this year of war distraction, and sufficient funds in hand to pay all bills.

Seminaries Readjusting Their Courses

A conference of representatives of seven Baptist theological seminaries was held in Boston on March 12 and 13. This meeting was convened in response to the invitation of President George E. Horr, of Newton, referred to in the March issue of the *Biblical World*. The *Congregationalist and Advance*, March 28, makes mention of this conference, the purpose of which was to consider the essential preparation for the inevitable social reconstruction that must follow the war. There were in attendance also representatives from nearby seminaries of other denominations.

The "Indispensable Minimum" was ably analyzed by Professor Gerald Birney Smith, of the University of Chicago, who concluded that the war was a social revolution, that the triumph of democracy was now the chief concern of the church, and that all theological training should be to that end. The non-college man had his rights upheld by President Evans, of Crozer. The value of laboratory and clinical practice for the prospective minister was emphasized by Professor Alton, of Colgate, and Dean Farmer, of McMaster. The central place of soul-winning was urged by Professor English, of Newton, while Professor Robins, of Rochester,

gave new insight into the possibilities of religious education, while he pleaded for a proper conception of the teaching function of the ministry.

The Jewish University in Jerusalem

At the late historic Conference of the English Zionist Federation a very significant thing occurred, viz., the public announcement by Dr. Weizmann of the purchase of a site for the future Jewish University of Jerusalem. The need and possibility of such an institution was called to the attention of Sir John Gray Hill in July, 1913. On what proved to be his last visit to Jerusalem he came in touch with leaders of the Jewish National Movement in Palestine, and the basis of the negotiations was then laid which ultimately led to a successful conclusion. The *American Hebrew*, March 29, discusses this new undertaking.

Immediately after the deliverance of Jerusalem, the negotiations, which had been interrupted, were resumed.

Within sound of the guns, Jewry asks His Majesty's government to permit "full investigation into the feasibility of the scheme for founding a Jewish University in Palestine, and, should military and political exigencies permit, to take steps for the initial undertaking."

There are many purposes which the university is intended to serve. First, the restoration of the country to its normal life. To this end Palestine will need doctors, engineers, architects, biologists, chemists, botanists, and geologists. Secondly, the work to be achieved by the university for the inhabitants of the Jewish national home has to be considered. Its part will be all-important. It will be both the reflective and the directive force in the Jewish national life—bridging the various elements and co-ordinating the various kindred institutions. Thirdly, the university with its press and extension system, "radiating its light and attracting its force from a Jewish environment," can revitalize Jewry the world over. Fourthly, in its

effect upon the other nations of the world, this university "will be the center of Jewish

humanism, which unites Jewry in fellowship with the free people of the world."

CHURCH EFFICIENCY

The Cost of Saving Men

Joseph H. Odell discusses this in the *Continent* of January 31. He says that up to a certain point Christianity is something for which to be both proud and grateful. After amplifying this statement he concludes, "Christianity has penetrated and glorified all the common experiences of human life. Stripped of the sentiment, the idealism, and the charming traditions of the faith, life would be a coarse and brutal affair and society would probably fall back into barbaric chaos." We recognize this and are grateful, but here we stop. To go further would cost financially and economically. To apply the principles of Christ in all realms of life would be too exacting and expensive. To cure the current grave evils would require too much effort, and would create too much disturbance. We do not wish to cause any trouble, therefore instead of curing or killing these evils, we bind them with chains, limit them by law, protect ourselves against the extremes of their bad effects. Thus we tolerate saloons, rotten tenements, political corruption and such like, and conclude that after all Christianity is rather a merciless thing when put into practice.

The writer says further

The issue must be faced. Christianity stands for humanity, and we are always being brought to the sharp alternative: men or money. It costs heavily in cold cash to put safety devices into factories and mills, to abolish grade crossings, to give shop girls a half holiday once a week, to keep children out of the labor market, to establish parks and playgrounds in our tuberculosis centers. So long as Christ floats about us as incense and speaks to us in the soft cadence of chant and litany and appeals to us in stained glass and oriental imagery, he is welcome, thrice welcome; but the moment he obtrudes upon the conduct of our business, or forces himself upon

our annual balance sheet, or looks over our shoulders when we are calculating percentages upon our investments, he becomes a menace to our established order, and with grave courtesy, even with a sigh that marks our resignation to an unwelcome inevitable, we bid him depart out of our coasts.

Christ cannot do men good and cast out private and social devils without disturbing and changing the social, economic, political, or other conditions in which such devils thrive. It is time that Christians should recognize this.

The Rural Church

In his recent book, *Rural Sociology*, Paul L. Vogt, Ph.D., devotes two entire chapters to a consideration of the rural church. He holds that "it is accepted by the closest students of the rural problem that the hope of the future in building a sound rural civilization depends upon the efficiency with which the rural church performs its service." The ultimate disappearance of the religious impulse from rural life need not be a cause for alarm. It is there to stay. Furthermore the most effective expression of this impulse and the molding of the social relationships of the community on the right lines rest upon the church, whether it works through subordinate organizations of its own, or through other organizations in the community, or through both.

For the church to render its largest service in rural life some things must have consideration. One of the most important of these is the location of the church plant. The church of the countryside is in the future going to be located in the village. Statistics carefully gathered show that the drift of the church from the open country to the village is not a passing phenomenon, but that the